Shirt Waist Girls' Strike the Greatest Struggle of Women In History of Labor

OUTDOOR GATHERING OF STRIKERS


OUT ON STRIKE

SHIRT WAIST STRIKERS ON THE MARCH

By ROBERTUS LOVE.

IN the history of the world no such scenes have been witnessed as those which for nearly two months past have characterized the strike of the shirt waist makers in the city of New York. Nearly 35,000 girls and women, members of the Ladies' Shirt Waist Makers' union, were engaged at first in this greatest strike of women workers ever known. For the first time since industrial conditions became such that women have been compelled to go out from home and support themselves and dependent relatives nearly all the workers in a great industry in one of the foremost cities of the world have engaged in a struggle with their employers, refusing to return to work until certain demands which they consider just shall be complied with by the bosses.

Conspicuous and significant features of the shirt waist girls' strike have been the entrance into the struggle of many women of great wealth and high social position and of others whose collegiate culture may be calculated by the unthinking to lift them so far above the plane of the working girl that a feeling of sympathy for her is scarcely expected of them.

Yet these college bred women not only have declared their sympathy for the strikers, but many have gone on active service as watchers and pickets to aid them in inducing nonunion girls not to take their places.

Wealthy Women Aid.

Among those of immense wealth who have been vigorous workers for and contributors to the cause are Miss Anne Morgan, daughter of J. Pierpont Morgan, and Mrs. O. H. P. Belmont, formerly the wife of William K. Vanderbilt, and the mother of Consuelo, duchess of Marlborough. Miss Morgan has given money and attended meetings in the interest of the strikers, while Mrs. Belmont, who not long ago became an ardent woman suffragist, has raised a considerable fund for the shirt waist girls among men and women of wealth and has gone personally to the night police court in the city of New York and waited hours and hours to go on the bonds of some of the girls who had been arrested, charged with violating the law in their earnestness as pickets.

On one occasion just before Christmas Mrs. Belmont remained until after midnight in the night court waiting for the cases of four striking girls to be called. She told the magistrate she could give her house at 477 Madison avenue as bond for the girls' appearance. The magistrate, not recognizing her personally, asked if she was re the house was worth $800, the aggregate required for the bonds.

"I think it is," Mrs. Belmont replied. "It is valued at $400,000. There may be a mortgage on it for $100,000."

Vassar Graduate Arrested.

Miss Violet Pike, a graduate of Vassar college, spent nearly ten hours in a police station cell, having been arrested when she was serving as a watcher outside one of the establishments where the girls were on strike. Miss Pike declared she had committed no offense whatever, but had been mistaken by the police for one of the strikers.

At a conference attended by Mrs. Belmont, Miss Morgan and other wealthy women a call was extend for young men students of Columbia university and young women students of Barnard college to volunteer as watchers and picketers. Many students responded. Scores of young women, graduates or undergraduates of some of the most noted colleges in the east, have gone on duty before 8 o'clock on the chill December mornings and remained throughout the day outside the shirt waist shops, their chief duty being to see that the strikers serving as pickets were not molested by thugs under employ of the bosses or unjustly arrested by the police. Picketing in connection with strikes is permitted by law in the state of New York. It is unlawful to use the word "scab" in addressing a person, "strike breaker" being the approved form. Many of the girls arrested, being ignorant of this law, were haled into court and fined because they yelled "scab" at some girl who had gone to work for one of the bosses.

In most instances the union paid the fines, but a number of the girls were sent to prison on Blackwell's island for several days each, the strike and its incidents being of such magnitude that the union officials were unable to rescue them in time.

Churches Help Strikers.

Late in December, when about four-fifths of the strikers had returned to work, most of them having been taken back on their own terms, some of the churches began to take steps to aid the girls. About 7,000 still were out, most of whom had been employed in the larger shops, whose proprietors, being rich, could hold out indefinitely. The Rev. Dr. Henry A. Stimson, pastor of Manhattan Congregational church, invited Miss Rose Schneidermann, leader of the strikers, to speak in his pulpit. A collection was taken up, all of which was turned over to Miss Schneidermann for use in continuing the strike. Dr. Stimson spoke words of encouragement.

About the same time Rabbi Stephen S. Wise of the Free synagogue, who went to New York a few years ago from Portland, Ore., delivered a sermon in which he declared that, "short of organization, there is no way in which the workers can bring about a permanent condition which shall assure them wages and hours that shall be just and reasonable."

Miss Schneidermann in the course of her address at Dr. Stimson's church explained in this way what the girls were striking for and the sort of treatment many of them were receiving:

"About three months ago a group of about 300 girls were locked out. Why? Because they joined a trades union. It was not a question of higher wages, but one of organization.

"After they were locked out, what happened? The police were called in to prevent them from picketing, as they are permitted to do by law, and they treated the girls outrageously. They were kept on one side of the street, and women of the street were sent there to cause them trouble.

"One day I went there, and although the only offense the girls were guilty of was a request to other girls not to take their jobs, many were arrested. Since that time the arrests have numbered from five to twenty-eight a day. And what were the demands that caused all of this activity on the part of the police? A request for a recognition of their organization and a working week of fifty-two hours. Is that such a terrible thing to ask of anybody?"

How General Strike Began.

The general strike was not declared until Nov. 22, when at a great mass meeting in the hall of Cooper Union, where Abraham Lincoln made his first speech in the east, President Gompers of the American Federation of Labor delivered an address on the shirt waist w "ers' situation. A Jewish girl, representing many thousands of her nationality who work in the waist shops, advanced to the front of the platform and delivered in Yiddish an appeal to those of her race to strike immediately. More than 2,000 right hands went up in response. The sentiment for an immediate and wholesale strike spread to the Italian and American shirt waist makers, and the "walk out" of seven-eighths of those employed in that industry was the result.

Under the system against which the strikers protest the girls, most of them under twenty-five years of age and many under twenty, some of them mere children, were compelled to work several hours' overtime four nights a week, with no time off for supper. On Sundays in many of the factories at the rush season the girls worked until noon, and in some instances until 4 or 5 p. m. Girls of tender age, the strikers declare, were running machines all day and far into the night at perilous physical strain.

Most of the labor is paid for by the piece. The girls are not asking higher pay for piecework, but merely a readjustment as to working hours so that they will not be worked beyond their endurance. Another grievance is that frequently when they reported for work in the morning the bosses insisted that they wait until noon, then informed them that there was no work for the day. The girls demand that they be notified at the starting hour whether or not there is work.

What do the girls who make the shirt waists worn by women all over America earn? Some of the younger and less experienced ones make only $3.50 to $4 per week. Others earn as high as $25 a week. The average seems to be somewhere between $8 and $10. Thousands of them support not only themselves, but sick or disabled parents and several little brothers and sisters.

Philadelphia Girls Out.

A few days before Christmas several thousand shirt waist workers in Philadelphia went on strike, the New York bosses having placed orders with the Philadelphia shops to manufacture waists for them during the struggle.

Whatever the opponent of trades unionism may think of the matter, it cannot be disputed that the loyalty of the great majority of the striking girls to their cause is a direct refutation of the ancient aphorism that you can't get women to stand together. These 35,000 shirt waist women stood together in solid phalanx while the grinning wolves of hunger snarled viciously at the doors of nearly all their homes.

The recognition of their union, their right to organize for mutual benefit, they insist upon to the letter. This great strike therefore is essentially a struggle upon the part of women workers for "the closed shop." For that reason if for no other the strike is of worldwide sociological interest.

Adulterated Butter In 1850.

Butter that was sold to the English working classes of the fifties was adulterated with ground flint. The flint stones were ground and manipulated into a substance called "soluble silica." This dissolved in water formed a stiff jelly, which was mixed with the butter, fresh salt and coloring matter being added. The compound resembled a very good looking dairy made butter.

Tests of Diamonds.

Most persons are obliged in the purchase of a diamond to rely implicitly upon the word of the man who sells the stone. While many years of observation and experience are needed to become an expert with respect to the value and purity of diamonds, yet there are certain extremely simple tests capable of being made by the most inexperienced. One is by means of a needle hole pricked through a piece of ordinary cardboard. Looking through the stone tested at the cardboard, one will see two holes if the diamond be spurious, only one if the gem be genuine. The reason for this is that an imitation diamond will give a double refraction, the real stone but one refraction. It is claimed that there is no acid having any perceptible effect upon a genuine diamond. Hydrofluoric acid will if dropped upon a stone made of glass corrode it, but upon the bona fide stone it will have no effect at all.

Victor Hugo's Hungry Days.

Victor Hugo was at the time of his death the wealthiest of nineteenth century authors. In his younger days, however, he knew the pangs of poverty, as after a quarrel with his father, General Hugo, he and his brother had their allowance stopped. "We made $160 last us for eighteen months. One chop would serve for lunch three days in succession. On the first day we would eat the lean, on the second day the fat, and on the third day we would suck the bone. We discovered place in the Quartier Latin where for 15 sous (15 cents) we obtained a four course dinner, a bottle of wine and as much bread as we liked. For another sou we obtained the sweetest of smiles from the pretty girl who looked after us." This regime does not appear to have spoiled Hugo's digestion, for at the age of eighty-three he cracked nuts with his teeth and ate oranges as some people eat apples—peel and all.

Relics of the Stone Age.

During excavations conducted near Willendorf, on the Danube, by the prehistorical section of the Austrian Natural History museum a chalk figurine eleven centimeters high has been discovered in a stratum containing instruments and weapons characteristic of the stone age.

Age When Infants Do Not Weep.

Very young children are not sensitive to pain to any great extent. A medical authority states that sensibility is seldom clearly shown in less than four or five weeks after birth, and before that time infants do not shed tears.

Pathetic Political Romance of R. C. Kerens

New Ambassador to Austria-Hungary Sought Senatorial Seat For Twenty-five Years In Vain

IN the list of ambassadors and ministers recently appointed by President Taft the one among the new names that has the most interesting political romance behind it is that of Colonel Richard C. Kerens of St. Louis, who is made ambassador to Austria-Hungary. The appointment is in the nature of a reward to Colonel Kerens for twenty-five years' untiring labor in behalf of the Republican party. Yet, while in one sense it may be looked upon as a triumph, it really sounds the deathknell to the only ambition Kerens ever had for political preferment. Kerens for a quarter of a century has had an eye single to the glory of a seat in the United States senate. He is sixty-seven years old. His removal to Vienna eliminates him from any further opportunity for senatorial honors.

While Colonel Kerens is known as a good loser, there is something pathetic in his failure to occupy one of the seats of the mighty in the north wing of the capitol. Three times he was the caucus nominee of his party in Missouri for the senate. Of course there was a Democratic majority in the legislature each time, but Kerens serenely awaited the inevitable event of a Republican majority.

In 1905 it arrived. But Thomas K. Niedringhaus, of the younger element, went in and captured the caucus nomination, which apparently meant election. President Roosevelt had congratulated Niedringhaus by wire as the next senator from Missouri. Kerens went in and smashed the Niedringhaus organization to smithereens and caused the election of William Warner. Though he did not elect himself, he defeated his enemy and performed a political miracle.

The old warhorse knew that was his final stand for the senatorship, for he was sagacious enough to be aware that future Missouri legislatures during his remaining years of vigor were quite likely to be Democratic.

Ambassador Kerens has been national committeeman for Missouri most of the time since he entered politics in 1884. He was one of the old guard in the Blaine booms for the presidency. In 1908, by the way, he made the largest individual contribution to the national campaign fund. Kerens is a multimillionaire. He made his money as a railroad contractor and in silver, iron and coal mines. He built many of the southwestern railroads and holds a proprietary interest in several of them.

Unlike most political "bosses," Kerens has kept his family on the wave crest of society in St. Louis. Mrs. Kerens and the accomplished daughter, Miss Gladys, may be counted upon to become social entities in Vienna, the city of beautiful women and glittering society functions.

Robert Bacon, appointed to succeed Henry White as ambassador to France, was a partner in the banking house of J. P. Morgan & Co. until 1902. President Roosevelt made him first assistant secretary of state in 1905. He was a Harvard classmate of Roosevelt. He declined appointment to the post of United States treasurer in 1903 because, it was said at the time, he had invited several friends to take a yachting trip with him around the world. He served as Secretary Root's first assistant until the secretary resigned to enter the senate. Then for two months Robert Bacon was secretary of state, retiring at the close of the Roosevelt administration. Ambassador Bacon's home is in New York.

That President Taft finally has found a man for the Chinese ministry who seems to suit all parties concerned has caused a sigh of relief to escape from many lips. William J. Calhoun, the Chicago lawyer, who goes to Pekin, is said to possess high diplomatic abilities. He will be expected to take up the delicate work which Charles R. Crane of Chicago, appointed and recalled before he got out of the United States, lost the opportunity to undertake because he talked about it to reporters.

Mr. Calhoun has had wide experience in international affairs. President McKinley sent him to Cuba before the Spanish war to investigate and report upon conditions in that island. It is believed that McKinley's whole course in regard to Cuba and Spain was based upon Mr. Calhoun's report. President Roosevelt sent Calhoun to Venezuela as envoy extraordinary to investigate the doings of President Castro of that troublesome republic. The Calhoun report from Venezuela averted war, though that from Cuba provoked it.

Calhoun grew up in Ohio, where he was a schoolmate of William McKinley. There is a story to the effect that young McKinley had such a high opinion of the abilities of his friend that he confidently expected Calhoun to become president.

"And when you are President Calhoun," said the McKinley stripling, "you'll give me a good post, won't you?"

Minister Calhoun served through the civil war, as did Ambassador Kerens. Mr. Calhoun settled in Danville, Ill., the home of Speaker Cannon, after the war and began his career as a lawyer. He served on the interstate commerce commission for two years. Both McKinley and Roosevelt are said to have offered him cabinet positions, which he declined, preferring to practice his profession.

ROBERT DONNELL.

Irresistible Onslaught of the Automobile

National Show Has 622 American Manufacturers as Exhibitors of Motorcars and Accessories

THE first national automobile show in Washington will be held from Jan. 24 to 29, following the tenth national show in New York, Jan. 8 to 15. That the irresistible automobile is to invade the capital for exhibition purposes was not necessary to prove that it has become a national institution. The machine which less than twenty years ago we called the "horseless carriage," for want of a better name, has made more progress in popular approval throughout the world in the past decade than has any other transportation contrivance since the axle operated circle—the wheel—was conceived by some ancient barbarian with glimmerings of progress illuminating his brain.

Late in December it was announced by the management of the New York show at Madison Square Garden that 622 exhibitors had obtained space. All these are American manufacturers. Eighty-six of them are makers of complete automobiles. The rest manufacture automobile accessories and motorcycles. At the first automobile show in this country, in 1900, only sixty exhibitors displayed their wares.

The writer recalls vividly a day less than fifteen years ago when he was walking past Grant's tomb, on Riverside drive, in New York. A "horseless carriage" whizzed by, leaving a gasoline stench that almost overpowered pedestrians. But every pedestrian, including the self sufficient natives of the metropolis, paused to gaze at the automobile. Those who were going in the opposite direction twisted their necks to "rubber" until the tendons almost creaked. At that time it was said there were but twelve automobiles in the state of New York. Today the license tags issued are in excess of 88,000 in that state alone. Great is the automobile!

No longer in any up to date town of America do we stop to stare when an automobile appears. We hustle to get out of its way. There are remote fastnesses whereto the automobile has not penetrated, but in all substantial farming communities the horseless vehicle is almost as familiar a sight as the horse himself. Any horse that shies at an auto these days is considered a greenhorn by his mates, the "Rube" of his race.

The automobile is built nowadays to carry one passenger or thirty. Some of the big "seeing city" carryalls can accommodate almost as many passengers as a day coach on a railroad. Prices range from $250 to any sum you feel like paying. Every year the machines are improved and the prices are lowered. The prediction made a few years ago that in time the automobile will become the poor man's vehicle seems almost ready to be verified by the fact.

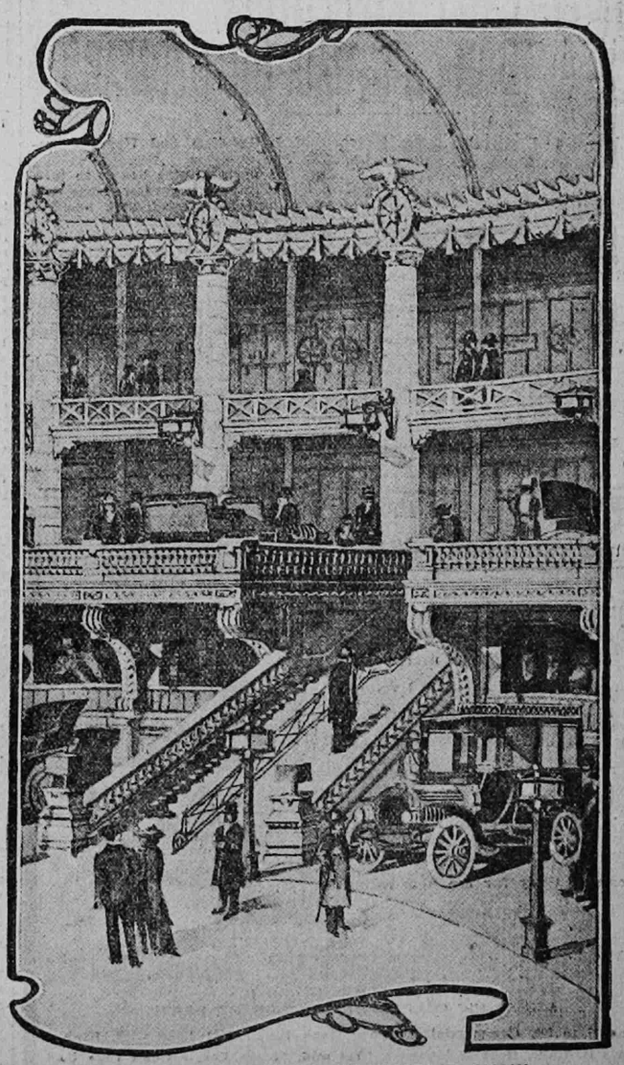
Several cars carrying four or five persons are built now and sold at something like $750, several others of two passenger capacity are priced at $500 and less, while there is a "skeleton" machine or two at half that price.

But any one who really wants an automobile need not pay even the minimum price mentioned. Daily papers carry long lists of small advertisements of secondhand automobiles, many of them touring cars, at prices less than $200. There are fashions in autos, as in clothes. The man who dresses correctly for society will have nothing to do with last year's cut of coat. The man who elects to keep in style automobilically will spurn with contempt last year's car. Castoff autos, like castoff shoes, still do reasonably good service, and many there be that ride therein.

The automobile is getting into its paces. Laws are being enacted to control it, and in many instances they are being enforced. It is interesting to point out the fact that the automobile might have been a thing of use and beauty three-quarters of a century before it finally came into vogue but for the fact that it was put out of commission in England by laws passed at the instance of the stagecoach operators, who were jealous of its increasing popularity.

Why, certainly there were automobiles in England seventy-five years ago. They were called steam carriages. They were crude, but they could make from ten to twenty-five miles an hour. When a law was passed charging a steam carriage $12 toll on a road that cost a stagecoach only 50 cents to travel the same distance the few horseless vehicle enthusiasts quit trying to develop the invention.

WILLIAM HENDERSON.


SCENE AT NEW YORK AUTOMOBILE SHOW.